

TOWN OF UNDERHILL
Energy Committee Minutes Final
Wednesday, January 9, 2019

Meeting called to Order 6:30 p.m.

Quorum established: Underhill Energy Committee (UEC) members in attendance: Peter Bennett (PB), Michael Oman (MO), Steve Webster (SW), Nicole Bourassa (NB) and Dwight DeCoster (DD)

Adjustments to Agenda

PB explained that a review of 2018 and discussion of priorities for 2019 would be put off until next meeting. Also, an update by Gerry Adams on landfill pollution readings will be postponed.

Public Comments – none

Reviewed Minutes from Dec 12, 2018

Minor changes suggested; motion to approve corrected minutes by DD passed unanimously.

Gravel Pit Solar Array Update

Tree cuttings on north boundary posed a problem for one abutter but PB reported that a solution was being pursued.

Survey Questions for the Planning Commission (PC)

PB reported on meeting with PC member Johnathan Drew (JD) to get a better idea of the purpose these survey questions are to serve. He reported that the best explanation was a general statement that this survey would “inform” the re-writing of the Town Plan for 2020.

PB also suggested to JD that the PC retain the Center for Rural Studies (CRS) to conduct the survey since they have a lot of experience in this area and did the 2008 Underhill Survey. JD said that they felt the PC could do this themselves.

PB made a motion to inform the PC that the UEC strongly advised at least looking at the possibility of using the CRS to devise and conduct the survey. The motion passed unanimously,

Several UEC members offered suggested questions for the survey. A key issue for which there were differing views was how much and what kind of context should be provided with any given question. PB pointed out that if the context too obviously supported a particular response, this could result in what is known as a “push poll” resulting in a biased question. At the same time, other UEC members (MO, NB) pointed out that perhaps the better informed respondents were, the more worthwhile the survey. Committee agreed to sort this out to arrive at a compromise.

Motion was made by SW to combine proposed questions by various members in a single document to allow easier editing. Motion passed unanimously. Both NB and MO volunteered to take a cut at editing.

Button Up (BU) Campaign Update

DD reviewed progress since the first BU program: good turnout and interest. He reported that 23 Underhill residents had signed up for the walk-through part of the program. Next forum will be Thursday, Jan10, subject to be "Do it yourself weatherization."

Underhill Energy Committee web site

UEC must still seek a go-ahead from the SB to connect the UEC website to the Town website.

Discussed content for web site. At top of list would be backup information for each of the energy workshops held. DD agreed to give the Committee links to various websites whose contents would be good background information for each forum topic.

Members agreed to consider outlining/writing up various topics for the website. Among the suggestions were providing information, either in the website or by links to other websites, pertaining to:

- choices for ways to heat a home;
- all available rebates for home owner energy efficiency expenditures.

SW indicated that content could be created in a Google doc.

Other topics

- Climate Reality Project and the possibility of sponsoring a presentation to Underhill/Jericho residents. NB agreed to look at dates later in the spring for such a presentation and to send a blurb on what this presentation is comprised of.
- SW gave details on the UVM NR 206 Environmental Problem Solving Course. He presented a proposed project for the course to investigate what might be considered to get the Town of Underhill to a "net zero" energy status. Part of the proposal was to get the UEC to sponsor this project.

Although the committee discussed the possibility of sponsoring this project, many issues need to be examined further. PB stated that he could not support any project that included biomass energy as a move toward "net zero." He agreed to give the committee an in-depth explanation of why burning biomass does not, in his view, satisfy the "carbon neutral" test.

Committee Operations

PB reminded the UEC that those members whose terms were up in March should consider whether they wished to renew. Also, elections for Chair and Vice-chair would be conducted in March or April.

Next regularly scheduled meeting – Feb 13, 2019.

On motion by SW, meeting Adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Submitted by Peter Bennett